

On Decision of Character.

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afraid of?—thy vessel carries Cxsar." * The brave men in the times of the English Commonwealth were, some of them indebted in a degree for their magnanimity to this idea of a special destination, entertained as a religious sentiment.

The wilfulness of an obstinate person is sometimes fortified by some single instance of remarkable success in his undertakings, which is promptly recalled in every case where his decisions are questioned or opposed, as a proof, or ground of just presumption, that he must in this instance too be right; especially if that one success happened contrary to your predictions.

I shall only add, and without illustration, that the habit of associating with *inferiors* among whom a man can always, and therefore does always, take the precedence and give the law, is conducive to a subordinate coarse kind of decision of character. You may see this exemplified any day in an ignorant country'squire among his vassals; especially if he wear the lordly superaddition of Justice of the Peace.

In viewing the characters and actions of the men who have possessed in imperial eminence the quality which I have attempted to describe, one cannot but wish it were possible to know how much of this mighty superiority was created by the circumstances in which they were placed ; but it is inevitable to believe that there was some vast intrinsic difference from ordinary men in the original constitutional structure of the mind. In observing lately a man who appeared too vacant almost to think of a purpose, too indifferent to resolve upon it, and too sluggish to execute it if he had resolved, I was distinctly struck with the idea of the distance between him and Marius, of whom I happened to have been reading; and it was infinitely beyond my power to believe

* "Unluckily that night a strong sea-wind sprung up, which overpowered that from the land, so that by the rage of the sea and the counteraction of the stream, the river became extremely rough, the waves dashed against each other with a tumultuous noise, and formed such dangerous eddies, that the pilot despaired of making good his passage, and ordered the mariners to turn back. Cæsar perceiving this rose up, and showing himself to the pilot, who was greatly astonished at the sight of him, said * Go forward, my friend, and fear nothing; thou earnest Cæsar and his fortune/ The mariners then forgot the storm, and plying their oars with the utmost vigour and alacrity, endeavoured to overcome the resistance of the waves."—PLUTARCH'S "*Cæsar*,"